





**MAN OF MANY MANSIONS** Hunt Sloness, a painter, bought an 1832 plantation house although he already owns one, as well as three other homes. It wasn't a question of need, he said, but of "hopeless falling-in-love."



By **JOYCE WADLER**

BACHELOR, La.

People come and go in the homes of the painter Hunt Sloness, both the quick and the dead. There's the handyman, who's brought a stray cat that's been screaming its head off all morning; the antique picker who has spread his wares outside; the friends who have stopped by to visit Mr. Sloness in his latest acquisition, an 1832 plantation house called Lakeside, pink if you please, as surprising in this community of shotgun houses as an aged diva in a pink organdy dress at McDonald's. Also as indifferent, inasmuch as a house can be indifferent, to the braining of time.

The long dining room table is set with pink porcelain plates, a few of which have been over-see with paper plates. Lunch is Louisiana takeout: boudin sausage, pecan pie, a local desert called awy gosey. The talk is of a portrait, just hung, of Catherine of Aragon.

Then Mr. Sloness's caretaker calls with word of an interloper: a wooden head, or something that looks like one, has been found in the third-floor ceiling earlier in the week and turked away in a kitchen cabinet. Mr. Sloness goes at once to retrieve the head, a small-colored walnut-size carving of a skull, with a tiny straw hat and pointy appendages. Then he retreats to make a call.

When he returns to the table, Mr. Sloness is relieved: the psychic did say her stomach hurt when he first mentioned the head, he says. But she believes whatever powers it once had to be long gone.

There are those who scoff at superstition. Mr. Sloness, a 55-year-old New York painter whose work, both artistic and domestic, is the subject of a forthcoming book, "Treasure Palace: The Art and Homes of Hunt Sloness," to be published by powerhouse Books, and whose paintings are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, does not. The spirit world figures in his life, his art, his five homes. He refers to psychics the way successful businessmen refer to their lawyers. "Till her the wire transfers haven't come through," he tells a caller. "My psychic says by the end of the week."

Speaking with Mr. Sloness, it is easy to become confused, for in referring to

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